1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

and consists ordinarily of a kitchen, occupying the greater part of the rectangle, and a second room, behind the hearth and chimney which occupy most of one end of the kitchen. There are sometimes one or two bedrooms at the opposite end of the kitchen, in addition. In East Clare this type of house is common, but there is also a squarer type which may have a second story.

The tiny peasant cabins dating from the last century are of the West Clare type; they were and are single-gabled, rectangular blocks of one or two rooms, with steep, thatched roofs and a single half-door on each side. The half-doors open directly out of the kitchen, the one to the windward kept closed. The modern stone cottages erected by the governmental agencies and patterned after those built first by the Congested Districts Board (1893–1923) are slated and weatherproofed. Except for additional four rooms, they represent the same pattern. It is impossible to give a statistical statement of the occurrence of this type of house or to correlate its numbers with those of the small farm families, but housing records show that 36 per cent of Clare's population live in three-room dwellings, 24 per cent in four-room dwellings, and 12 per cent in two-room dwellings, which seems to point to a fairly close correspondence between the proportion of small farm population to total population.

In the small farmer's house of this type, the kitchen is the seat of family life. In it are the hearth, at which cooking is done, the table around which the family – first the adult males, then the women and children – eat, the kitchen utensils, and the religious shrine of the "Blessed Lamp" and the Sacred Heart picture before which the family prays the "Family Rosary" at night. Here also is the "dresser" found in nearly every small farmer's house, a sideboard filled with fancy china and porcelain used only for family festivals and to give to marrying relatives. The family will part

2. Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ERo Rural Irish ERo

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1. Thatched-chimney. Co. Clare.
2. Making hay-ropes. Glencolumbkille, Co. Donegal.
3. Hobwalls carrying the chimney. Toormakeady, Co. Galway.

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2.

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3.

[p. 219]

2. Campbell B, E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Donegal

PLATE XLVIII

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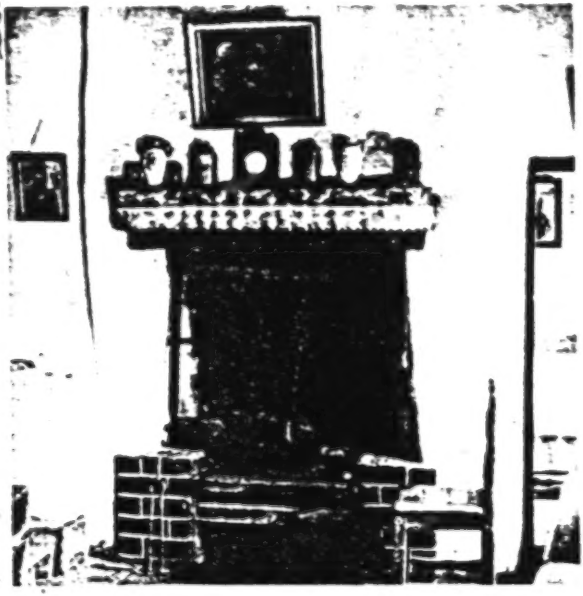

1. Fire-place with iron-grate. Glencolumbkille, Co. Donegal.

2. The basket hanging to dry on the southwall of the house. Lough Eske, Co. Donegal.

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[p. 220]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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on stones used as hoes for cultivation. We have direct evidence that some form of agriculture was practised at this time in Ireland, about forty centuries ago, and it is here that the foundations of Ireland's peasant culture must be sought. Some scholars have argued that a simple wooden plough reached Atlantic Europe not long afterwards from the Mediterranean, but the digging stick was probably the main cultivating tool: the digging tradition has remained all-powerful in Ireland, and even to-day the narrow Irish spade or loy (Chapter 13) is little more than an iron-shod digging stick.

Fig. 5.
Fashions in Pots.

Communal tombs of great stones built by these bringers of civilisation—the giants' graves of the countryfolk and the megalithic monuments of the archæologists—tell us a great deal, from their distribution and their contents, of the areas occupied and the beliefs held by the first Irish farmers. Glacial sands and limestone exposures attracted them on account of their easily-worked soils and natural clearings, while the thin soils and therefore light forest-cover of the hill-slopes and plateaux drew them by stages into all the scattered mountains from Wicklow to Kerry and from Antrim to Donegal. The discovery of grains of wheat and of saddle-querns for grinding corn, as well as countless sherds of hand-made pottery, show that they were settled farmers: their large round-bottomed pots, often provided with holes or lugs for suspension over the fire, are plausible forerunners of the common iron "pots" which are indispensible in every farm and cottage to-day. It should be borne in mind that the sub-boreal period (Chapter 3), from which this culture dates, was a time of warm dry climate, so that settlement and cultivation of wheat and probably barley were possible at elevations where they would now be difficult if not impracticable.

Bone-finds tell us that the Irishman's oldest animals were the pig and the ox. By analogy with other parts of northern Europe we should expect the earlier folk of the Mesolithic to have possessed the dog, though there is no clear proof of this. The horse, the goat and the sheep were perhaps

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

the 17th century, the natives withdrew themselves to the mountains, where they lived a life that some historians have mistaken for aboriginal nomadism.

The booleying tradition, finally, throws light on many of the customs connected with cattle and sheep, and helps to explain the absence of the dairy in permanent dwellings which formerly had to serve as winter houses only, most of the dairy work being done in summer. It also helps us to attribute to custom rather than solely to laziness and neglect the Irish farmer's traditional indifference to the fate of his crops during the summer months. "Spring and harvest time," we quote a typical 19th century observer, "are the only periods at which the peasants exert themselves, and then they work very hard; for the rest of the year they are idle."

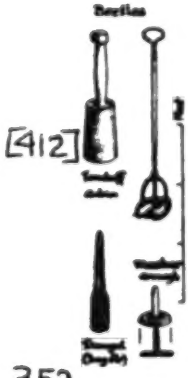
Fig. 18. Co. Antrim.

The old customs of tending ("herding") the cattle and tethering or spancelling them also derive from the rundale phase with its lack of field-divisions and fences. "Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats," wrote Arthur Young, "are all in bondage, their forelegs tied together with straw . . . . cocks, hens, turkeys and geese all have their legs in thraldom." Various devices for limiting the freedom of farm animals are still widely used: even the hen with her chickens around her will be seen tethered by the leg to a stone or iron weight. Where animals still run in common under the system of "sums" it is necessary to give them distinguishing marks. Apart from the well-known methods of branding or colouring the sheep's wool it is the custom in parts of Ireland, as in Wales, to ear-mark sheep by cutting or notching the ear with proprietary shapes. In Clare Island the geese are "tokened" by having holes punched in their webbed feet. Incidentally it is worth noticing that, so far as I am aware, the iron-tipped shepherd's crook is unknown in Ireland, a bent ash stick taking its place. "Gatherings" and co-operation are of course a feature of sheep-shearing and dipping. Sheep-pens of dry stone construction are often associated with ancient settlements among the hills: they are of various shapes and would repay study.

[p. 56 is BLANK]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

352 workmanship of the Welsh oak dressers, is an essential part of the kitchen and, like the keeping-holes mentioned above, has its prototype in the stone shelves of some of our oldest prehistoric dwellings. The dresser belongs, like so many of the other elements we are discussing, to the "Atlantic" province of European folk-culture. It accompanies the open hearth tradition as distinct from the "oven tradition" of central Europe, and may be thought of (compare the absence of the large table mentioned below) as providing storage while taking up a minimum of the valuable floor space in small single-roomed houses. The dresser has its fixed place in the layout of the kitchen, the position varying, however, according to the district, the type of house, disposition of the doors, and so on. In the outshot houses it stands against the side wall alongside the bed, whereas in the central-hearth type it lies 352 across the kitchen opposite the fire and helps to partition off 415 the end room. The bottom of the dresser is open. Here the hen-coops, of straw, wattle or wood, were sometimes kept, but one is more likely to see a collection of iron pots and the crocks, buckets or wooden stave-built vessels (piggins) for holding water or milk. The latter I have seen covered with roughly trimmed stone slabs (Fig. 68), a prehistoric device which has the advantage of coolness and gives protection from the cats. On the dresser are a few bits of "delph" and the tin mugs which have displaced the wooden noggins. Delph, as kitchen-ware is called, has not long since become general in remote parts. Of Mayo in the last century we read that "all their vessels were of wood, most of them cut out of solid timber." These included not only platters, spoons and ladles, but also methers or drinking cups of various sizes. Where the crockery tradition is of old standing, plates, jugs and long rows or nests of bowls "whammeled," that is tumbled on their sides, line the dresser shelves. Here, too, are the beetles of different shapes (Fig. 30) used for pounding or mashing the potatoes. The upright milk churn commonly finds its place alongside the dresser.



352 Fig. 30.

One very rarely sees a table of any antiquity in an Irish kitchen: it is generally of deal and it is placed against one of

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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Oatcake Toasters (Harnen Stands)

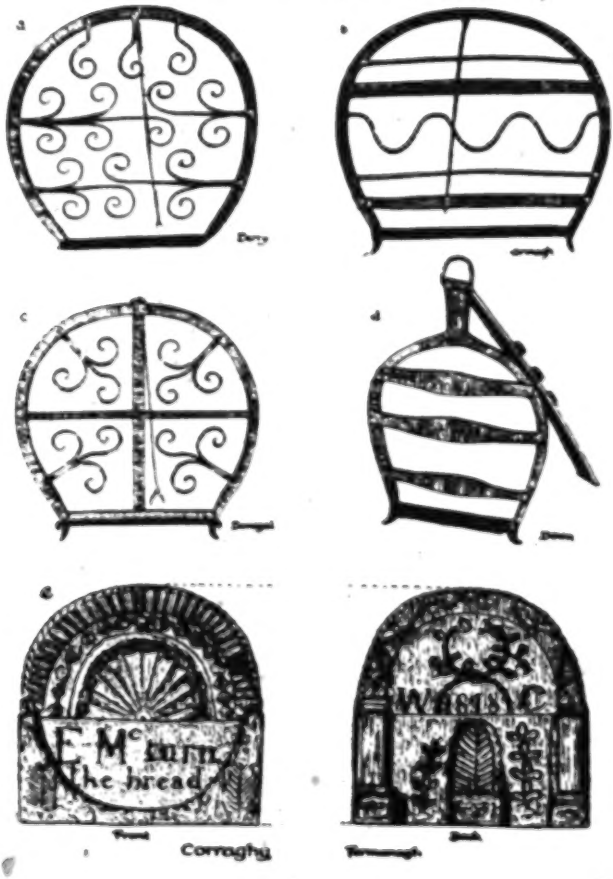

Fig. 33. Scale ½. a, b, c, d, iron; e, stone.

[p. 74]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

the south, local smiths vied with each other in producing elaborately-made toasters, or " harnen stands," which are of many different styles and deserve study before they all find their way to the scrap-heap (Fig. 33). When grates became fashionable, toasting " fenders " were hung on the bars. The large flat oatcake is cut into four quarters or " farls."

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[415]

[417]

Fig. 34.

Fig. 35.

Nowadays the oatcakes have been superseded by wheaten bread of various kinds : the flour is often mixed with a bit of maize or barley flour and the baking is done either on the griddle (Fig. 34), in a deep " fry pan," or in the pot-oven or " bastible " (Fig. 34). Meat roasted in the pot-oven can be delicious and I have a taste for rice puddings done in this way. Others may tell of the virtues of the " bap " and of potato " slim bread," and it is not for me to repeat the strictures of Young and Cobbett on the strong tea which they said would ruin the peasantry. It should be added that the thin-bread tradition has been developed by the town bakeries into a bewildering variety of breads and scones.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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The round-bottomed three-legged iron pots (Figs. 5 and 34), of various sizes from the small porridge pot to the giant 18 gallon potato pot, are descended from the bronze cauldrons of which there are many specimens in the museums ranging in date from 700 B.C. to 1700 A.D. The cauldron was in old times the special property of the head of the house and figures prominently in Celtic mythology and folklore. The pot has been described as the "maid of all work," but boiling potatoes for man and beast is now its main task. The heaviest pots are going out of use with the introduction of raised grates.

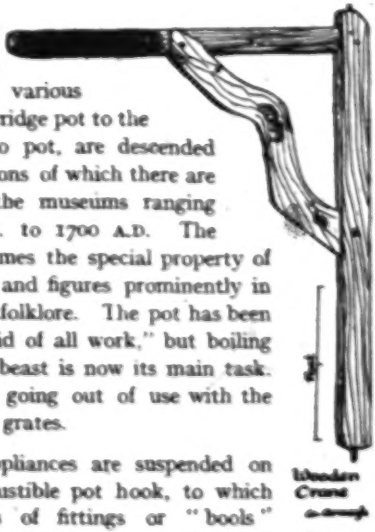

Fig. 36.

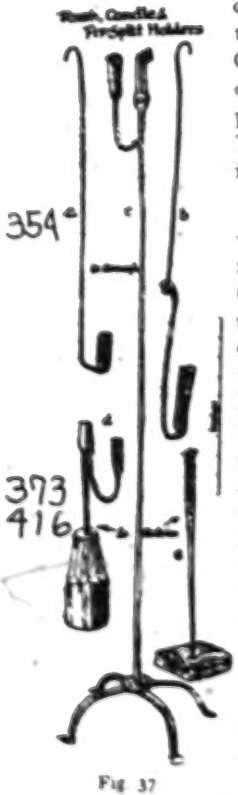

Fig. 37

These various appliances are suspended on the iron crook or adjustible pot hook, to which many different kinds of fittings or "bools" (Fig. 35) can be attached. The crook may simply hang from a bar placed across the chimney, but more commonly from a crane (Fig. 29) which swivels at the side of the fire. A few examples of the wooden crane survive (Fig. 36) By the fireside, too, are kept the short iron tongs or "mudyees" and the heather besom (Fig. 29) which is more efficient than any broom in cleaning among the hearthstones. A goose-wing serves to dust the pots and clean the griddle when baking. Here by the fireside was hung the crusie oil lamp (Chapter 16, Fig. 105) which is another element of the north-western province of European folk-culture and may have its prototype in the famous "hanging bowls" of over 1,000 years ago. A selection of old-fashioned smith-made iron light-holders of different kinds is shown in Fig. 37. There are more elaborate styles, but the charm of these homely appliances lies in their simplicity. The upper figures from Co. Armagh (a and b) show weavers' candlesticks, made for suspension from the loom. Figure (e) is for holding a "split" or thin strip of resinous bog-fir. The others (c and d) are

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

243 survivals, associated with the cutting of the last sheaf—the "churn" or the "Cailleach" (Chapter 19).

Corn stacks are more varied in shape than haystacks and need better protection from weather and from vermin. [824] Sprigs of apple-mint (*M. arvensis*) may be thrown through the sheaves to keep away mice. The stone stack-stands or staddels, called "hovels," are a picturesque feature of the stackyard in some districts. With their steep tops rising above the house clusters, the golden corn stacks turn the little Irish villages into African kraals, or in the fields one may count as many as 30 round stacks in a row, rising against the sky up the hillside. Then the whole countryside seems fuller than usual. New colours and odours meet one on all sides, and the horses as they pass give off the sharp smell which comes from crunching the fresh oats. The country smiths used to make a small light fork or "pike," fitted with a long handle, for throwing the last sheaves high up (Fig. 66). The stacks are thatched with rushes, twisted into bundles known as "stapples" which are pushed into the straw.

[285]
[415]

Fig. 54.

241 We cannot touch on the methods of harvesting and stacking the other cereal crops, wheat, barley and rye, but a word must be said in conclusion on the last harvest of the year—the root crops. Although turnips and the new sugar beet are important in some areas, it is the potato crop which means most to the peasant. All available hands are in the fields, gathering the precious food-supply into wicker baskets or boxes (Figs. 54 and 55); and the school children are given

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

special holidays. The potatoes are sorted, the small and faulty roots being put aside for the stock and poultry. The crop is then " pitted," that is piled in long heaps in the field and covered with straw and earth. October is the potato month, and under the old system the limiting date was Hallowe'en, for after that the animals were allowed to roam freely over the village or townland. It should be noticed that early potatoes are little esteemed in Ireland apart from commercial cultivation in a few coastal districts. A curious example of specialized potato-growing is cited in Chapter 16.

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[415]

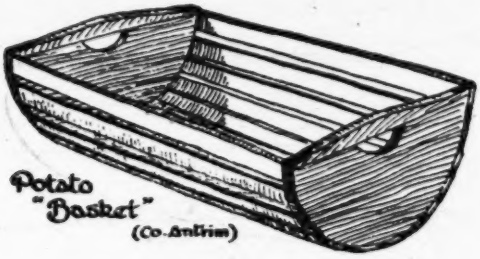

Fig. 55. (22" by 16")

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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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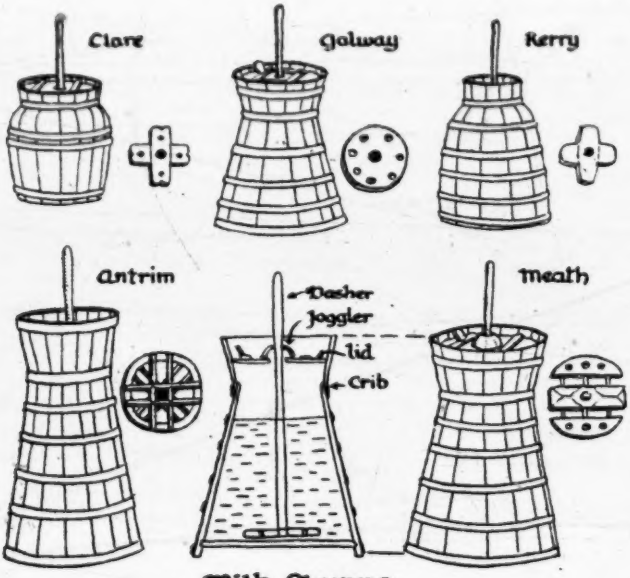

Milk Churns

Fig. 67.

Fig. 68.

[415]
[281]

of these are in regular use: I illustrate a piggin or milking vessel (Fig. 68), a butter tub, and an old-fashioned tub of bog-fir, bound, as were the other stave-vessels before the adoption of iron hoops, with split sally rods, and covered with a stone lid. Two smaller stave-built noggins for holding water, milk or porridge are also shown (Fig. 69), the Tyrone example being of oak with an ash wrapping, the Donegal specimen of bog-fir and sally bands. Passing mention must be made of wooden spoons and the handsomely carved butter stamps (Fig. 70). Wooden dishes, ladles (Fig. 70) skimmers and jogglers (Fig. 67) are made of sycamore and turned on the pole-lathe.

Sieves of various kinds found a use in the dairy as well as in kitchen and barn. Among the exports from Ireland in

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

former centuries animal hides and skins figured prominently, and it is not uncommon in the west to see cured skins of wild and domestic animals used as floor-coverings. No doubt in earlier days skins and furs were worn, but in modern times raw-hide has been employed only for shoes such as the "pampooties" worn by the Aran Islanders. These have the advantage that they do not damage the frail curraghs, just as the Islandman's headgear is the knitted Tam o' Shanter which the wind cannot blow off. A century ago one might have seen a dried sheep-skin serving as a window, or even a cowhide used as a door-hanging. Sheep- and goat-skins still find their uses as back-protectors (Chapter 16), in the making

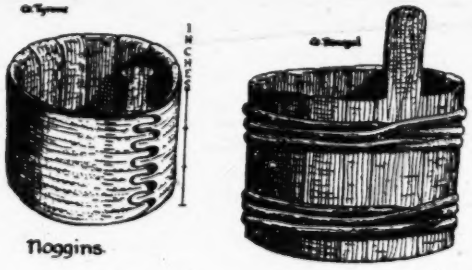

Fig. 69.

of thongs for flails, and especially in providing bottoms for various trays and sieves, the only difference between them being that the sieve-skin is perforated.

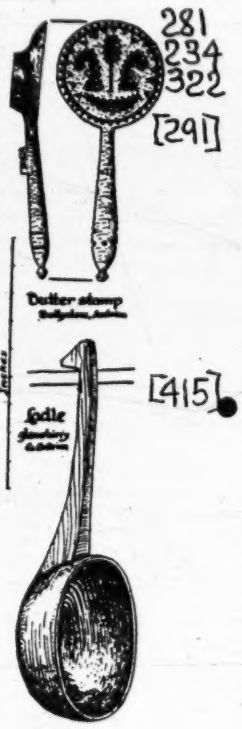

Fig. 70.

The skin, scraped and dried, is wrapped or sewn on to a rim of ash or bog-fir (Fig. 71), and a good deal of skill is required to stretch it on without a wrinkle. These trays are called wights or wechts in the north-east: the peat wight is for carrying turf to the house and the corn wight for pouring corn into a sack. The winnowing tray sometimes has small perforations to allow the wind to pass through as the corn is shaken on to a cloth. A windy spot was selected for the purpose, and numerous "Shelling Hills" get their name from this operation. The perforations, about one-eighth of an inch

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9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

281 across, are commonly arranged in patterns having, for example,
415 the maker's initials and the date left unpierced. A deeper tray used for carrying corn or for fruit-picking is known as a "dallan." Then there is the meal sieve, which has fine perforations, for sifting the coarse skins (meal seeds) from the oatmeal. Similar to this is the buttermilk sieve with which,
285 before the adoption of the hair sieve, the small particles of
415 butter were strained from the buttermilk. A milk-strainer made of birch bark folded into a cone and filled with straw is referred to in a 17th century account quoted by Mr. E. MacLysaght. In Tory, according to Mr. T. Mason, the wight is "composed simply of sheepskin with a twisted straw rope forming the rim."

The corn sieve, for getting out dust and dirt, and the corn riddle (Fig. 71), for separating bits of straw and "hairy

[281]

Fig. 71.

tails," consist of interwoven splits of ash or bog-fir attached to a rim of the same material. The only difference between them is that the mesh of the former is one-eighth of an inch, of the latter perhaps ¼ inch, though it may vary for different kinds of grain. Efficient riddling is a difficult and nowadays rather rare art. I have not come across sieves of rushes or split willow, but it is very likely that they may be found.

243 The corn riddle and the winnowing tray lead us back to
412 the thrashing floor in the barn. Here we will probably see a flail hanging on the wall. The sound of the flail is by no means rare in Ireland, for in outlying districts the small farmer has no other means of thrashing. The three parts of the flail are the helve or "hand-stave," a straight stick of any light wood such as ash or larch, the shorter and heavier swingel or beater, called in Ireland the "souple" (generally made of hazel, occasionally of holly or birch) and the flail-joint, hanging or
[284] "mid-kipple," which may be a sheep- or goat-skin thong, a

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Lough Neagh—incidentally one of the oldest occupied areas in the country—the valley of the Suir and the Aran Islands. I illustrate a boat-shaped yarn-holder (Fig. 73) and also two types of " calf basket " (Fig. 74), which are tied over the calf's muzzle to prevent it from taking the cow's milk. (In north Antrim, as in Wales, I have seen instead a leather strap armed with nails which is fastened on in such a way that the nails prick the cow's udder). The calf basket recalls the Roman *corbis constricta* which prevented the plough oxen from cropping the vine shoots. In fine work the basket maker uses split rods which he prepares with a " cleaver." The example illustrated (Fig. 75) is made of cow's horn.

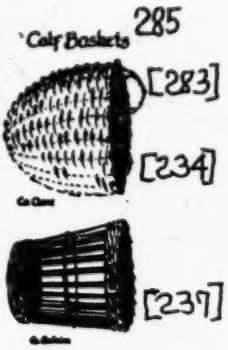

Fig. 74.

Fig. 75.

Then there are the shallow fish baskets, resembling the potato-dish shown in Fig. 31, which the Galway fisherwomen carry on their heads. In Limerick oval trays or " floats " are used for hawking shell-fish or fruit: they are of various sizes from 1 to 2 feet in length. Potato baskets (Fig. 54) and shallow baskets used in connection with wool-dyeing must be mentioned, and I illustrate two kinds of linebasket (Fig. 76) which, like the lobster pots (Fig. 104) are made by the fishermen. The tall apple-baskets used for picking fruit in the Armagh orchards taper down to a narrow base. On the other hand the deep carrying-baskets of the Aran Islands are shaped

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

352 stools, and a rough table or two, with a dresser containing a scanty assortment of coarse earthenware, a spinning-wheel, and a quilting-frame, constitute the furniture of the kitchen. In one corner is a pile of turf for fuel, on which the fowl roost, and above the couples are stored the dried fish, &c., for the winter's use, and the agricultural and piscatorial implements.

415 The domestic utensils consist of the usual large three-legged pot, slung on a crook over the fire, a griddle, a frying-pan, and, perhaps, 352 a quern, a boran or sieve of sheepskin stretched over a wicker frame, and a couple of skids or shallow, circular wicker baskets. The furniture of the bedroom, or rooms, consists of a couple of tent beds; a few chairs and, perhaps, a small table. There is very rarely a loft 331 to the house. At night the cattle, fowl, and pigs are taken into the kitchen, the pigs being accommodated in a pen beside the fire-place, while the cattle are fastened at the opposite side of the room.

[491] 6. *Transport.*—The roads are good, and extend over a large part of the islands, but are only used for foot traffic and cattle, as there are 492 no wheeled vehicles of any description, and all goods are carried [482] either in hampers slung on the back, the usual method of taking home potatoes, &c., or in two wicker panniers or cleaves, slung across the back of a pony or donkey, one or other of which is owned by nearly every family. The harness of these animals is home-made, and of primitive design, the panniers, manufactured from osiers grown on the islands, being slung from pegs on a wooden frame, beneath which, to protect the animal's back, is a thick straw mat saddle. Both sexes ride on the horses behind the panniers, and both adopt the same position, a side-ways posture, the men not riding astride.

[243] The method of taking home the harvest is picturesque; the ponies have cloths hung over their faces to prevent their eating the grain, and are then literally clothed with sheaves, which are hung all round them, and piled up so as to give them the appearance of walking straw stacks.

501 For water transport there are a good many boats of various descriptions, the primary use of which is for fishing; only one, the [505] post-boat, which goes thrice a week to the mainland if the weather permits, being regularly used for transport.

The number and classification of the boats are, it is believed, given correctly below, but it was difficult to get any two accounts to agree.

There are five hookers, seven pookauns,[1] fifteen curraghs, one yawl, and about thirty rowing-boats.

[1] An undecked sailing-boat, cutter rigged.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

cemented by "dobe" or tempered clay, or sometimes mortar. It 342
generally consists of two apartments, the kitchen and the "room." The kitchen, which is usually of pretty large size, is used as the living room; it has a floor of beaten clay. This room has one, or perhaps, two windows of small size, and seldom made to open. These are always glazed now-a-days, but in the last century they were covered with oiled sheepskin. The house has two doors, both of which open directly into the kitchen, and are situated about two-thirds of the way from the partition wall of the two apartments.

The end of the kitchen farthest from the fire is used as a pen for [231]
the cattle and pigs. The fowl roost where they can, often on the backs of the cattle.

Above the beams or couples in this part of the kitchen boards are sometimes placed, making a sort of loft, in which fishing and boat tackle, agricultural implements, and other articles are stored.

The fireplace is built against the partition wall between the [354]
kitchen and the room. It consists of a stone hearth backed by a "hob," also of stone, built out slantwise behind it to make the fire draw well. This class of house has no chimney, the smoke escaping through a circular hole in the roof immediately above the hearth.

"The room" is a smaller apartment than the kitchen, (measuring about 12 feet by 10 feet) it has one or two small windows, and the floor is sometimes boarded.

The furniture of the house is poor and scanty, that of the kitchen 352
consisting of a bedstead, rudely made up of drift-wood, two posts being driven into the floor, a longitudinal piece uniting these and two cross-beams at head and foot resting by one end on the posts, and having the other built into the wall. Sometimes it is built up into four-poster shape and has curtains. The bedding is composed either of feather ticks, or, with the poorer people, of straw, covered with coarse sacking. The bedclothes are often very dirty. There is a dresser covered with earthenware plates, cups, and jugs of a poor and cheap description, a table, two or three chairs, and a couple of forms or settles. A long straw rope is usually stretched across the apartment to hang clothes to dry on. Worsted when spun, nets, &c., are hung from the couples.

"The room" contains one or two beds of the sort described, a chair or two, a table (in some cases), and a large chest.

The domestic utensils consist of the usual three-legged pot, a 415
griddle, a gridiron, and sometimes a pot oven, a few staved wooden piggins, a boran or sheepskin sieve, and, in the mountains and islands, a quern, now only used usually for grinding barley for cattle food,

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

415 though it may be put to the less innocent purpose of preparing malt for poteen, and a spinning-wheel of the usual type. For light at night 373 modern lamps are coming into use, but in many houses the "flare" is used. It consists of a rude sconce, in which is fastened a cylindrical reservoir for oil, closed at the top by a lid, and having a spout like that of a coffee-pot, through which the wick is drawn. Rush lights are still used by some.

342 The house is often whitewashed outside; the roof is thatch, of straw in most localities, but on the islands, and some places in the peninsula, bent is use instead. This is laid on over "scraws" of grass-turf and fastened down by sougans (straw ropes), the ends of which may be attached to pegs driven into the walls, or have long pieces of [284] wood or heavy stones fastened to them. These ropes are often arranged in a net work so as to hold the thatch more securely. Coir rope, bought in Belmullet, is now used by some instead of sougans. The gable is stepped or cut away so that the thatch does not project over the end wall.

There are several other types of houses, though the style just described is the most common. Most of the newer houses and those building have chimneys, pig-styes of turf or stone, and in some cases byres. Few of the old one-roomed dwellings, built partly or altogether of turf, are still to be seen, but there are a number of one-roomed huts of stone, many of which have no windows.

The most primitive habitations in the district, and perhaps in Ireland, are the rude huts (*boolies*) on Inishglora, inhabited during the lobster fishing season by the men of Inishkea; they are about a dozen in number, rudely built of dry stone and thatched with "scraws." There is not room to stand upright in them, the height from floor to roof being about 5 feet. Internally they contain a rude bunk filled with straw for sleeping in and a few large stones to sit upon. Cooking appears to be done out of doors. Successive batches of men live in these huts for about three months of the year. Some of the poorest houses on the mainland are in the isolated and primitive village of Fallmore, where few of the dwellings have windows and few or none chimneys. The houses on the islands are decidedly among the best in the district. Many are whitewashed inside, and the furniture is of a superior class, abundant material being thrown up as drift wood. The beds are four-posted structures, with flat board tops, and some of them have bright-coloured curtains, and the bedding is clean and tidy-looking.

489 6. *Transport.*—Lying as it does far from towns of any size, and separated from the nearest by a wide stretch of wild and thinly-

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

178 grinding barley for cattle food, or in some few cases for malt for [412] *poteen*.

Hooped piggins are used in many houses, as also are sheepskin ●[415] sieves (*borans*).

The spinning-wheel for wool is of the usual Connaught type, with- 178 out treadle, and is made in the district. The cards used for the wool 283 are imported, being all made in Dublin. The hand-looms are the same as used elsewhere in the West, and of rather rude construction, though capable of turning out good work.

A machine of rather primitive design is used for compressing cloth. 287 It was made by its user, and has been working for many years.

Rush-lights are used in some houses, and in others the rude lamp 373 already referred to, which is evidently merely a reproduction in tin-ware of the old stone or iron lamp for fish oil.

The stills employed by the makers of poteen are constructed of tin, 273 and of simple but effective design. They are made in the owners houses by tinkers.

The curragh, of the usual form, is the boat most in use, and seems 501 likely to hold its own. It is now covered with tarred canvas, but seventy years ago horse-skins were used for this purpose. A large stone is often used as an anchor for small boats.

2. *Antiquities* may be divided into two classes—(*a*) Architectural 172 remains, and (*b*) Articles of use or ornament. (*a*) Architectural remains are still very numerous, though many of the most interesting have altogether disappeared; of these the most noticeable was the *Oileach*, the fortified seat of the chiefs of Hy-Fiachrach, which was situated at Elly in the Mullet, on or near the position of Bingham's Castle. Several castles belonging to the Barrets and Burkes have also been entirely destroyed.

Some of the ruins still remaining are of pagan origin, others are ecclesiastical structures. The principal pagan antiquities are the duns or forts, both stone and earthen, the monuments, &c. There are several duns, both within the district actually treated of in this Paper, and along the coast line of the surrounding country; those within the Mullet are *Dunnamoe*, a stone fort of large size, built on a rocky promontory overhanging the sea, and formerly one of the most perfect on this coast; of late years, however, it has suffered severely, the greater part of the wall has been broken down to afford building material for houses and walls about Belmullet; the guard-chambers mentioned by O'Donovan and others are now almost destroyed, the outworks thrown down. One part of the wall alone

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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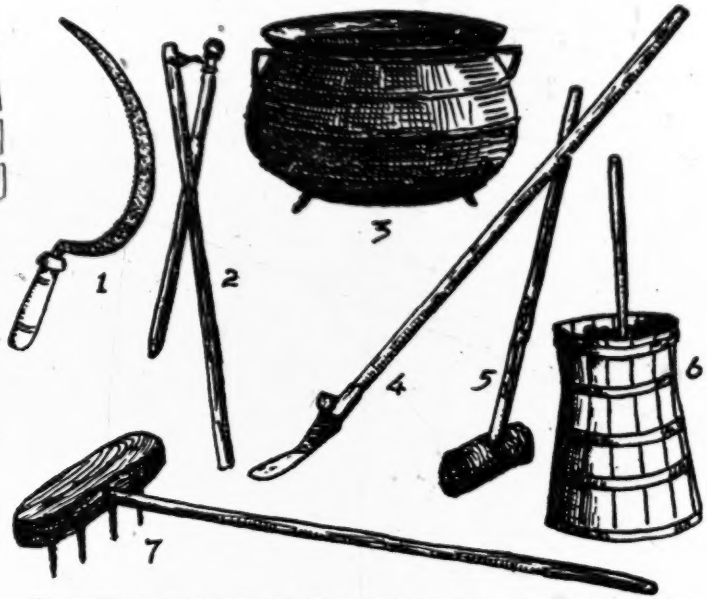

FIG. 1. 'The toothed sickle (1), the flail (2), the one-eared spade (4), the clod-breaking mallet (5), and seek-rake (7), the upright churn (6), and the three-legged pot (3), can all be closely matched in illustrations of English medieval rural life.'

district to another. The interest of these relics is enhanced when one discovers parallels among simple societies in distant parts of the world.

These ancient diversities are being ironed out at an increasing rate, and the opportunity of seeing and, what is more important, placing on record these age-old crafts and rites will soon pass. The wonder is that so many have persisted through the political, economic and social upheavals of the last 150 years. During that period the steady decline of the Gaelic language resulted in the loss of a great deal of information on local and regional life and of a vast store of oral literature, in which the lore of an ancient civilization was enshrined. The scientist must regard this loss as a tragedy comparable to that suffered by the historian in the disastrous burning of the Dublin Four Courts in

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Down

PLATE 1

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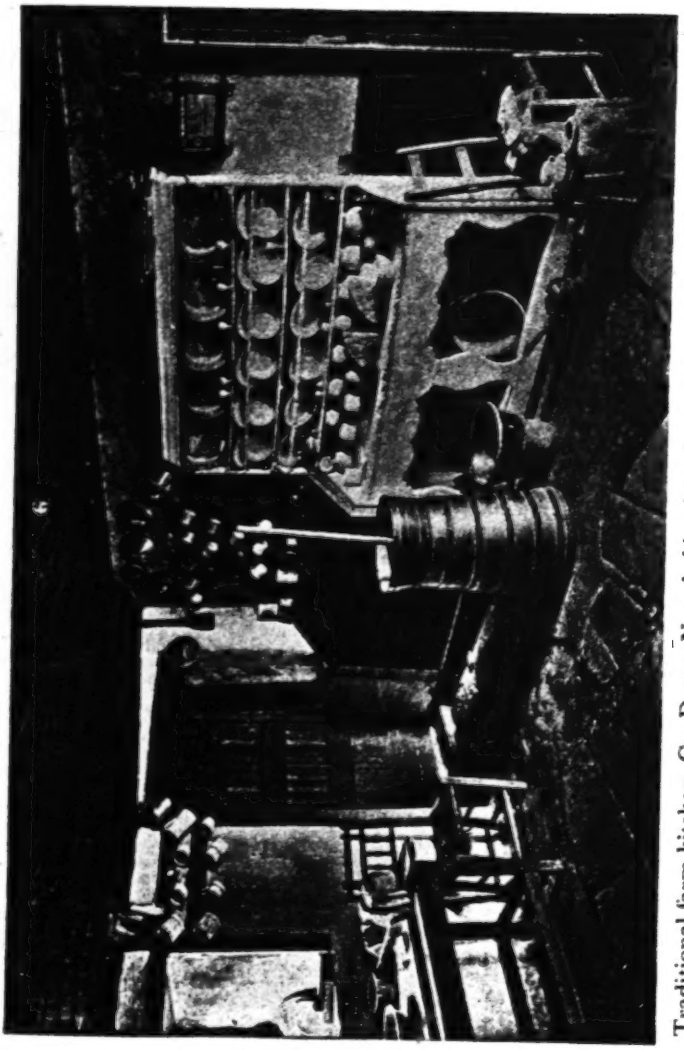

Traditional farm kitchen, Co. Down. Note baking-board on table (*left*) and meal ark to left of dresser, with beetle hanging above.

[facing p. 32]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Antrim

PLATE 2

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Butter-making in a Co. Antrim farm kitchen.

[facing p. 33]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 kitchen is generally floored with puddled clay which takes a surprisingly well-wearing surface. The housewife will tell you that such a floor raises less dust than one of concrete, and if it tends to wear unevenly this matters little since the cooking pots and some of the furniture which is not built-in has three legs instead of four and will therefore stand firmly on an uneven floor. The rocking chair, despite New England's claim to have invented it, was surely first devised for such a floor. Lime, cowdung or ashes were sometimes added to the floor when it was being prepared, and mud scraped off the road, already well puddled, was considered an excellent floor material.[1] In Armagh, we are told, floors were made by simply digging up the ground and trampling it: 'They sometimes have a dance for that purpose, and many a match comes out of a thing of the sort.'[2] Another method was to keep a flock of sheep moving about the newly spread floor for some hours until it was well puddled. The bottom byre-end of the old-style one-roomed farm house was cobbled, and a flagged walk led from door to door. Devices for tying up the cows were secured to or built into the bottom gable: a variety of stone and wooden fasteners may still be seen in the deserted houses of Slievemore on Achill Island. One writer humorously observes of Co. Galway that the cow had to be tethered lest she should eat the bed-straw, but that pigs and poultry were free to roam.[3] The hens spent the night on a rope or pole hung across the kitchen from eave to eave, and laid their eggs in handsome nesting-baskets of woven straw (Fig. 16). Here we may notice a curious bit of folklore which suggests that hens were carefully looked after for superstitious reasons, as well as for their economic value and for the cockerels' time-keeping. It is said that every night the hens, when they argue among themselves before settling down, are plotting to leave Ireland and fly back to Norway, but in the end they decide to postpone the trip for another day! In Co. Limerick elaborate three-tier wooden hen-coops are sometimes seen in the kitchen, and in Co. Down I have found the sitting

[415] [352] 231 353

[1] J. Binns, *The Miseries and Beauties of Ireland* (1837), 1, 112.
[2] Ibid., 186.
[3] T. A. Finlay, 'The Economics of Carna', in *The New Ireland Review* (April, 1898).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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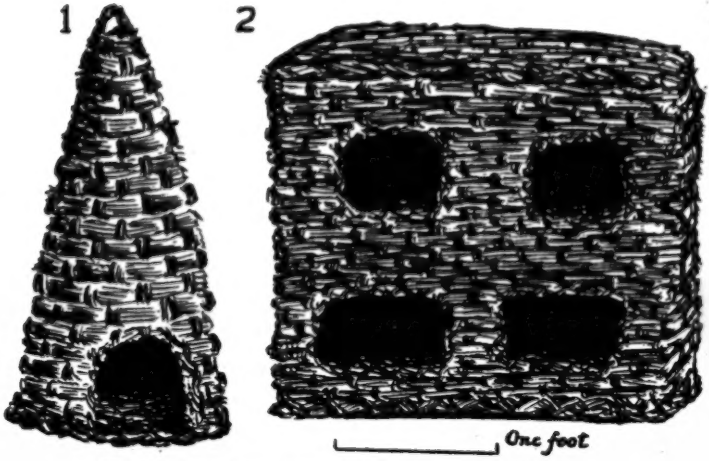

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FIG. 16. Straw hens' nests. (1) Co. Clare. (2) Co. Leitrim.

hen warmly ensconced in a stone-box alongside the fire. In the mud floor one may sometimes see large 'pot-holes', hollows in which the heavy iron pot is placed when the boiled potatoes are pounded for pig-food (Fig. 19). The wooden or iron 'beetles' with which the pounding is done are as varied in shape and size as they are indispensable (Fig. 17). Sometimes

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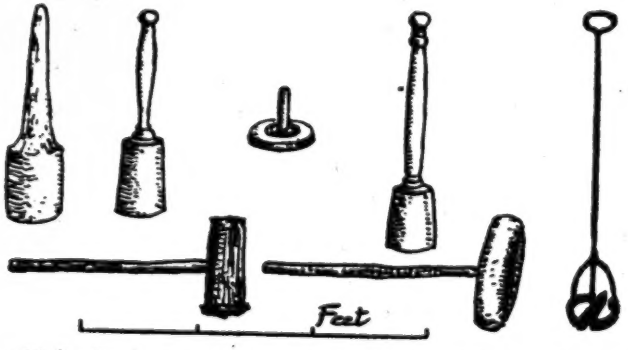

FIG. 17. Beetles, for pounding potatoes and, below, mells for 'knocking whins', Co. Antrim. Beetles similar to the first example were formerly used also for washing clothes and for breaking flax before hand-scutching.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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VI

POTS AND PANS

323 STORIES of 'the crock of gold' remind us of the superstitions which have gathered around the humble unglazed vessels of 415 baked clay used in prehistoric times for domestic and funerary purposes. The novel art of pot-making—the magic transformation of soft clay into indestructible pottery—must have made a deep impression on the native mind when introduced into Atlantic Europe from the Mediterranean region some forty centuries ago. It symbolized, too, a new way of life, for it accompanied the revolutionary arts of food-production and the establishment of settlements which were more or less permanently fixed to the soil. The possession of pottery greatly facilitates cooking and boiling and marks the beginning of the long line of peasant soups, stews and porridges. But primitive pottery does not stand up to hard use and the wastage was great—to the delight of archaeologists. For prolonged stewing metal vessels were preferable, and in Ireland 'the pot', in recent centuries, invariably refers to the three-legged iron cooking pot. Life revolves about the fire and the pot, and it was remarked during famine years that victims 'clung to the pot when all else had gone'.

172 For the archaeologist potsherds are an invaluable guide to changes of culture. Clay vessels had religious as well as domestic significance, and we know that as the Bronze Age advanced through the second millennium B.C. the domestic food vessel was adopted as a cinerary urn, and the deposition of cremated bones in urns continued in Ireland into the Christian era. Earlier, some of the megalithic cults had involved the offering to the dead of enormous quantities of broken pots. In

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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POTS AND PANS

a late Neolithic burial cairn at Lyles Hill near Belfast I found tens of thousands of potsherds which had been collected from domestic refuse and thrown into the cairn during the course of its erection.[1] The broken plates which may be seen exposed on the graves in some old burial-grounds in Co. Mayo are probably placed there in continuation of ancient practice. The breaking of pots is one of the elements in Hallowe'en pranks—one might almost say rites—and again we notice the association with the dead, for All-Hallows is the time when the dead are believed to return to their homes.

It would appear that by breaking a pot you broke its spirit; and by transference the power of the dead to do harm. Readers will recall the significant lines from *Hamlet*, referring to the suicide of Ophelia: 'Her death was doubtful . . . for charitable prayers, shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her.'[2] In some places in south-west England potsherds figure in the 'lent crocking' rites at Easter: like Easter eggs they are symbols of fertility. The association of fertility and decay, of life and death, comedy and tragedy, is clearly displayed in the wake games which are described in Chapter XX. This association, we note in passing, is ever-present in the mind of the Irish countryman, and the juxtaposition gives dramatic quality to the work of many Anglo-Irish playwrights.

This is not the place to enlarge on the technology of early pot-making, but it may be observed that the designs, fabric and finish of the Neolithic family of pottery in Ireland were far superior to those of succeeding periods: indeed it was not until wheel-made pots found local markets in the medieval towns that technically superior vessels were made in this country. In late prehistoric and early historic times the wealthy were able to import fine wares in small quantities from the continent, but the peasant homes over most of Ireland apparently did without pottery—the Gaelic word for potter is a loan-word—and vessels of wood, metal or leather did duty for the now universal imported 'delph'. The Dutchman, Gerard Boate, writing in 1645, said that 'the use of earthen vessels hath been very rare among them, and to the most part unknown even

[1] E. E. Evans, *Lyles Hill: a late Neolithic site in Co. Antrim*, H.M.S.O. (1953).
[2] *Hamlet*, Act V, Sc. 1.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

323 until these very last times, although a great number of English
415 potters have set up their trade'.[1] No tradition of hand-made pottery survived in Ireland as it did in the Barvas ware of Lewis in the Hebrides. On the other hand another ancient craft
415 of prehistoric origins persisted into living memory in the making
322 of wooden noggins in which milk and porridge were taken. They are small stave-built vessels of oak, having one stave projecting

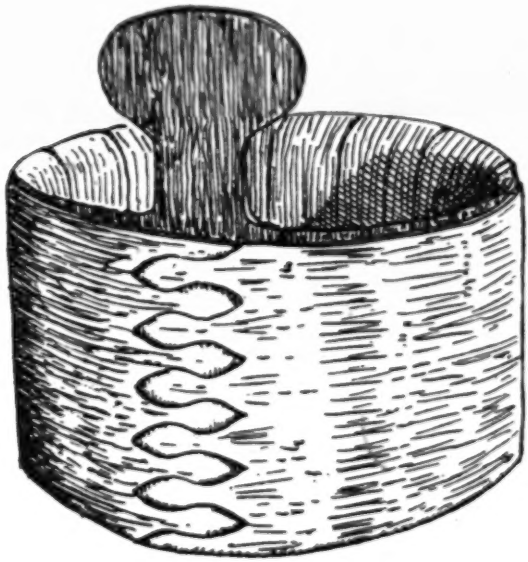

FIG. 22. Wooden noggin, Co. Down. Height of rim, 3 in.

to serve as a handle. The staves are held together and the single-piece base kept in place by a thin band of ash joined by interlocking tongues (Fig. 22). This method of fastening the [171] wooden band is found on the similar 'piggins' of parts of Britain, also in Scandinavia and throughout the Asiatic Arctic region, and it may well derive in these islands from an ancient circumpolar culture. The noggins were made by skilled craftsmen who

[1]Gerard Boate, *Ireland's Natural History* (1652), 159.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

were known as noggin weavers. Cheap delph has now taken the place of the noggin, but the word survives in a phrase I have heard applied to a child who is thriving on his food: 'he wants a stave out of his noggin'.

The art of pot-making declined and in many parts of the country almost disappeared after the late Bronze Age, when bronze cauldrons came in to provide serviceable cooking-vessels. Some archaeologists have related this decline to the climatic deterioration of the late Bronze Age, but it is more reasonable to associate it with an increase of pastoral pursuits and a diet of whitemeats. The bronze cauldrons were highly prized: from Gaelic literature we know that they were the special property of the head of the house and they seem to have taken on something of the magic of the early pots. They were sometimes credited with strange virtues such as the ability to yield to each guest the piece of flesh to which his rank or occupation entitled him, and they occupy a prominent place in folk-lore and legend.

It is interesting to notice that the bulk of the earliest prehistoric pots in Ireland are of plain brown burnished earthenware, faithful copies of the leather prototypes proper to a pastoral people. This western European Neolithic pottery is one of the indications of a common substratum in the early civilizations of Atlantic Europe. The round-bottomed vessels simulated round-bellied leather containers, which may well have continued to be used for cooking into historic times. We know that whole cow-hides were employed for the purpose in Elizabethan times. This is undoubtedly a survival of older custom: we find it among hunting peoples, for example the Indians of Labrador are in the habit of preparing broth in a vessel made from the belly of a caribou. A relic of the substitution of pots for skins may perhaps be seen in the persistent Irish belief that the money obtained from the sale of a cow-hide should be used for the purchase of a metal vessel. The Scots, as Froissart and Burt tell us, cooked their beef in skins stretched on four stakes. Fynes Moryson says of the Irish: 'Flesh they seethe in a hollow tree lapped in a raw cow's hide, and so set over the fire.'[1] From prehistoric times we have many ancient

[1]Fynes Moryson, *The Description of Ireland*, 228.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

cooking places, which have been popularly known to Irish-speakers as *fulachta fiadha* (deer roasts), consisting of mounds of burnt stones usually set in marshy places. Excavations have shown that they contain dug-out trunks or plank-lined pits sunk in peat where water was heated by hot stones. Hundreds of these mounds are known in Cos. Cork and Kilkenny and they occur sporadically in other parts of the country, as also in Wales and more rarely in England and Scotland. Some Irish examples have been dated to the Bronze Age, though it is believed that their construction continued into the Middle Ages.[1] They are interpreted as the bivouacs of summer hunting parties, and would represent an archaic tradition preserved by the privileged classes, but they have their humble counterparts in the stone-lined pits filled with hot turf, in which, I have been told, peasants would cook their potatoes when working some distance from home.

FIG. 23. Cooking pots: round-bottomed suspension vessels through 4,000 years: Neolithic (earthenware); late Bronze Age (bronze); medieval (bronze); and modern (cast iron).

The essential continuity of form and function is strikingly demonstrated by a series of Irish cooking pots such as is illustrated in Fig. 23, from the round-bottomed Neolithic bowl with its suspension holes to the present-day globular iron pot with its twin lugs and its three stubby legs—a concession to a hard uneven floor. The three-legged pot is the countrywife's maid-of-all-work and it is only slowly giving way to flat-bottomed pans and kettles. The oven-pot also, a kind of Dutch oven, is widely utilized, and the pot-roasts which it cooks to perfection have replaced spit-roasted meat. It is said to get its other name, the bastible, from the fact that it was first made at

[1] M. J. O'Kelly, *J.R.S.A.I.*, 84 (1954), 105–55.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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Barnstaple in Devon. The oven-pot may be suspended over the fire but in the south rests on a trivet: the lid is dished so that live turves may be placed on top. It is used also for bread-baking, though the griddle is most commonly employed for this purpose (Fig. 24). 415 ●

FIG. 24. Oven-pot, griddle and trivet.

Here we come to a fundamental fact in the geography of the Irish hearth—the absence of the built-in oven. The one exception which proves the rule is its occurrence in the extreme south-east, where, in Co. Wexford, the baronies of Bargy and Forth have retained many features dating from their English settlement in medieval times. Over most of Ireland even when a cooking-range is installed in the hearth, the oven is not used for bread-baking, for oven-bread is not a native food. In central Europe on the other hand the bread-oven, originally of clay, is of great antiquity and the stone or metal oven has come to dominate the fireplace. The difference in bread-types is related on the one hand to environment and economic organization and on the other hand to a whole set of eating habits and ethical values. 354 [262] [171]

Thin bread, or bread in cakes, made without yeast, has been from early times the common bread in most parts of Atlantic Europe, from North Scandinavia to the Basque Country, including Highland Britain and Ireland. Farther afield it is typical of many Mediterranean areas and parts of Asia. In north-western Europe it is closely linked with the cultivation of oats, though home-baked wheaten bread is made in the same way and mixtures with maize and with potatoes are similarly prepared. Potato bread (fadge), a mixture of wheat flour and boiled potatoes, is a popular food which surely had its origins in difficult times. 262 252 171

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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FIG. 25. Oatcake toasters (harnen stands). The first three 'bread-sticks' make an evolutionary series. They are from Armagh, Galway and Clare. Nos. 4 and 5 are bread-irons from Derry and Down; the latter is fitted with a spit-rack. No. 6 (from Fermanagh) is in stone. No. 7 is an unusual type from Armagh. No. 8 is a toasting fender from Antrim.

252 Among food gatherers such as the Californian Indians we find that wild oats are parched before they are ground in a mortar. A similar custom, known as 'burning the corn in the ear', survived until recent times in Ireland and met with as

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

234 407 Bad luck could not always be avoided, but at least it was desirable to make the toil less wearisome, and to this end a number of ingenious fittings were applied to the churn staff. Most of the examples I have seen, in the north-east, depend on the recoil of a strong spring to lift the staff, and they may well have been evolved from a spring pole, such as is used for the pole lathe, attached to the roof timbers.[1] Other devices enabled the staff to be moved in both directions by an arrangement of levers hinged to a couple-baulk. These engines, which have almost entirely gone out of use, were known as glaiks (Fig. 31).

● [415]

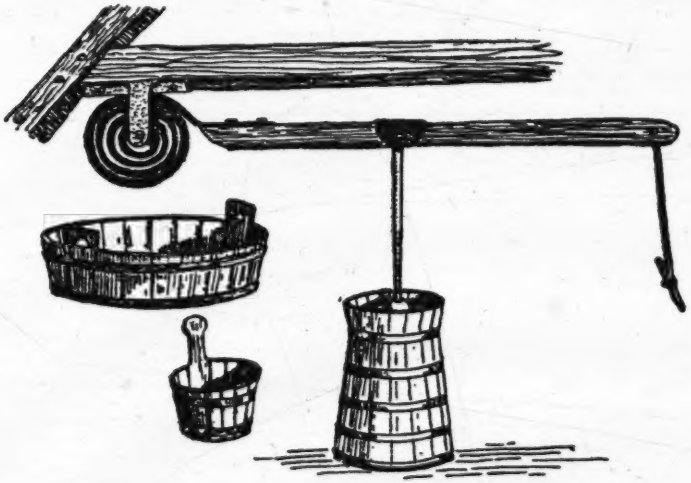

FIG. 31. Glaiks for churning, Co. Down, with milk 'keeler' and piggin, Co. Donegal.

353 788 Here we may mention other things which were hung from the roof timbers: in the more prosperous homes sides of bacon and portions of the autumn-killed ox, the mart; in poorer houses the salted ling or other 'kitchen'. And there was a strange custom of keeping in the roof, to bring luck to the livestock, part of a carcase, such as an animal's leg. This undoubtedly had its origin in the days when living-room and byre were under

[1]For another device, fitted to the churn, see my *Mourne Country*, Fig. 84.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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one roof. A relic of this practice may perhaps be seen in the sheep's bones that one occasionally finds tucked away in the keeping-holes of old-fashioned houses. Above the door the Bridget's Cross gives protection from fire and other dangers. 353 788

Besides the churn the old-time farm will have a wide range of other wooden dairying utensils, some stave-built, others carved or turned from the solid. They will include milking-piggins (Fig. 31), cream-skimmers, ladles, butter-scoops, and -prints, butter tubs and buttermilk butts. A shallow stave-built 'keeler' or a large turned bowl is kept for setting milk (Fig. 31). The solid and often shapely carved cups and methers (literally mead bowls) are already archaeological specimens (Fig. 65), and many of the other wooden containers are going the same way, including the little stave noggins described in an earlier chapter. 415 234

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

hanging skins, carpets or tapestries of other cultures. Today 285
the most familiar use of the plaited mats is as creel mats on the [342]
backs of asses (Fig. 56). When creels are dispensed with and
the load is placed directly on the ass a simple 'sugan' is some- 285
times made—a ring of straw some fifteen inches in diameter 492
bound with a fine straw rope. This is a variant of the head-
wreath once widely worn in western Europe as a carrying pad.
Straw collars—made entirely of straw and not merely straw-
stuffed—have so recently gone out of use that I have seen several
decayed specimens on hill farms in the north, and the art of
making them is not forgotten. In their construction several oval
rings of three-strand straw plait are stitched together (Fig. 69).
Unlike the ordinary Irish horse collar, they are, of course, not
made to open; they were carefully shaped to hold flattish wooden
hames.

Many varieties of baskets of straw rushes and other pliant 285
materials which were once made in the homes are now known
only by name: for example, the puckan of built-up plaiting which 415 ●
held seed potatoes in Co. Down, or, hung in the stable, served as
a nest for pigeons. They had short lives, and few specimens
have survived, so that we shall never know the full range of
such domestic skills. On the other hand fancy basket work,
using both whole and split fine sally rods, has probably long
been a specialized craft, and has clung to certain districts such
as the shores of Lough Neagh and the Suir Valley. As in these
areas so all around the coasts of the island it is a craft which
accompanies fishing skills. The long-line fishermen of the sea
coasts have traditionally made their own line and fish baskets,
but it is only inland communities such as those mentioned who
have become commercial basket-makers, possibly because their
fishing was more seasonal than that of the sea folk. Their
products are now mainly baskets for carrying potatoes or turf
(Fig. 71). In a special class are the large creels and carrying
baskets made of hazel or black sally which were generally
employed for farm transport before wheeled carts were adopted.
In many districts these were made by itinerant creel-makers who
were held in very low esteem, next above the hackler and the
tinker. The method of construction, in which the standard rods
are stuck upright in the ground, stamps the craft as being of

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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285 ancient origin. We shall see that it is the way the Boyne
● 415 curraghs are built, and it is said that the African pygmies make their carrying baskets in similar fashion. For lightness and to facilitate lifting one or more rows of open 'windows' are left in the sides of the creels. Those used for seaweed were sometimes quite open in construction, and like the manure pots they were generally fitted with hinged bottoms for unloading (Fig. 56).

301 Besides their utilitarian uses, rushes, grasses and straw have
524 long been playthings for young folk who fashion out of them,
285 for love or for luck, many varieties of decorations and emblems. We describe the Briget's Crosses elsewhere (Fig. 85). Harvest
[832] knots, twisted out of the ripe straw of harvest, seem formerly to have been in truth love tokens, though now worn merely as buttonholes for the harvest fair (Plate 18). As one might expect, the girls' knots were the more ornate and they differed from those worn by the boys in having the ears left attached. Some exceptionally fine specimens are fashioned out of flax or fine wild grasses. Star-shaped emblems in these materials are also made (Fig. 70). More complicated knots have four or six strand work, but the ordinary knots are in two ply, made by bending the straws sharply over each other at right angles. Before being knotted they make tolerably strong cords: I have experimented with these on unbaked clay pots and find that when impressed in the soft clay they make very good imitations of the 'cord impressions' seen on Bronze Age pottery. I have heard that in Nigeria the same two-ply technique is employed in making roulettes, from the fibres of the wine palm, for decorating the native pottery. Among the many toys and playthings made of rushes we find baskets for wild strawberries and blaeberries, rattles, butterfly cages, fishing nets, caps, bracelets, belts, hatbands, mock-ceremonial whips, canes and swords and imitation birds' feet and flowers, some of which are shown in Fig. 70. Many of them are associated with particular
[517] occasions of the year, for example the imitation flowers with Easter and the blaeberry baskets with Garland Sunday (Chapter XIX) but in general they are the products of the infinite leisure of long summer days of cattle-tending in field, bog or mountain. Probably a number of these objects once had a practical value

 [text continues on p. 210]

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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HOME-MADE THINGS

The straw cape placed over the bee-skep (Fig. 69) is a humble relation. Straw masks are worn also by Biddy Boys on St. Briget's Eve, and by the Christmas Rhymers. On St. Briget's Eve, too, a small straw doll (Brideóg) was dressed up and carried from door to door in the south-west of Ireland. A charm of plaited straw known as Bratóg Brighde (literally, Briget's Rag) is carried by the fishermen of Tory Island as a protection against storms (Fig. 70, *5*). There was also Briget's Girdle, a two-strand straw rope, a circle with crosses attached, which was passed over the body as a protective charm, by inserting one leg and then pushing the head through on the Saints' Feast Day (Fig. 85).

Before the Irish live-cattle trade developed there had been for some centuries a great export of hides and skins, and if one goes back earlier it becomes clear that these products must have found a multitude of uses about the farm. For a number of purposes where toughness and durability are specially needed animal skin has remained a traditional material, and in old-fashioned mountainy areas the countryman makes a habit of curing the skins of wild and domesticated animals on the principle that 'you never know but what they'll come in useful'. On analogy with the Hebrides, with which Donegal in particular shows close cultural affinities, skin mealbags should have had a place in cottage economy in north Ireland. When grinding corn, a skin was laid on the floor under the quern to catch the meal. Seal skin served many purposes, from plough traces, in Harris, to the covers of curraghs in Donegal. We have descriptions of cured sheepskins serving as windows,[1] and (from St. Kilda) of fowling ropes bound with strips of salted cowhide to prevent them from being cut by the rocks.[2] But it is in the skin tray, the wecht or wight, that one is most likely to see tradition maintained (Fig. 71). The well-scraped skin of sheep, or sometimes of goat, is stitched on to a rim of ash, bog fir or, in the naked islands which have exhausted even their bog timber, a ring of sugan. To secure the skin free of wrinkles is skilled work, and the finished product is not unlike a tambourine: in fact, it closely resembles the Eskimo caribou drum. Irish wrenboys

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 25.
[2] Martin Martin, *The Western Isles*, 315.

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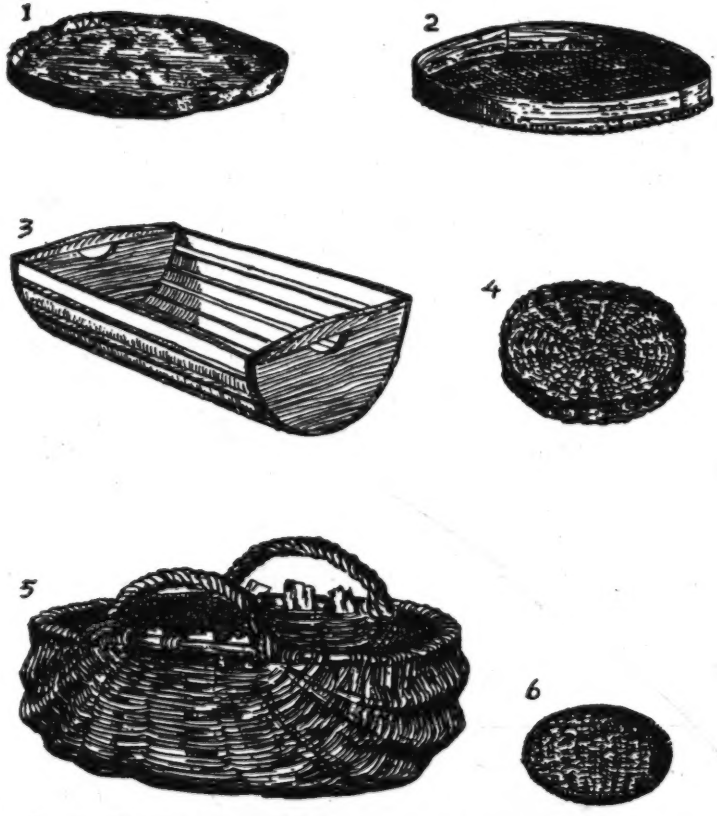

[322]
[285]
[285]

FIG. 71. Skin-tray, split-ash riddle and potato baskets. Approximate scale 1/9 (No. 5, 1/6). (1) Sheep-skin tray or wight. (2) Split-ash riddle. (3) Potato 'basket'. (4) Potato skib. (5) Potato basket. (6) Potato skib. (All Co. Antrim.)

Irish wren boys

[534] carried a skin tambourine which they beat when hunting the wren on St. Stephen's Day, and one wonders whether the drummers from whom the Orange performers on King William's Day inherit their wild rhythms were trained on ceremonial wights. (There are also sieves, riddles and shallow baskets of split ash or sally, but these, for example the flat round potato skib—a communal self-service plate—should properly be classed as the work of specialists. 212 (Fig. 71).

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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as the work of specialists (Fig. 71). The pampooties of the Aran Islands deserve mention here. Made of calfskin, but formerly of sealskin,[1] these one-piece shoes were once doubtless widely worn and have kept their hold in Aran because of their suitability for wet rocks and frail curraghs. The rivlins of Scotland and the Highland *bròqan* were very similar and I have seen rawhide shoes of the same type from Norway and the Pyrenees. They all have the hair outside and are secured by lacing back and front.

The wight serves both to hold corn, in filling a sack for instance, and to convey peats from the stack to the fireside: perforated it becomes a meal-sieve (boran) for sifting the skins (seeds) from oatmeal, or a buttermilk sieve for taking out the last grains of butter from the churn. The winnowing tray or dallan is a larger version, and it, too, may be perforated to allow the wind to pass through as the corn is shaken out on to a spread cloth. There are, up and down Ireland, many bold windy Shilling Hills where the 'shellings' (husks) were, in past times, separated from the grain in this way (Pl. 7).

This brings us to the flail and its 'hanging' (the mid-kipple, hooden, gad, middling, or tug) which was commonly a thong of cow-, horse-, sheep, or goat-skin, though sometimes of rabbit- or eel-skin or a cord of flax. The flail, the proverbial 'stick-and-a-half', consists of a three to four feet long helve or hand-staff, usually made of ash, and a shorter beater, swingle or souple of hazel or holly. There are two principal methods of 'hanging' the parts together. In one variety, the tie passes through two leather caps lashed over the ends (Fig. 72, 1). This appears to be a variant of the common English flail-hanging, where, however, the cap is made of steamed ash or yew and there is no linking piece. Its distribution in Ireland, down the east coast, points to derivation from England. Modifications, occurring as far west as Donegal (Fig. 72, 1*a*, *b*), have the linking thong passing through a hole made either in the helve or in the beater. Kevin Danaher states that the capped flail is characteristic of central Europe: it is believed to have first appeared in north France in the early Middle Ages.[2] The

[1] O'Flaherty, *H'Ier Connaught*, 59 (footnote).
[2] *J.C.H. and A. Soc.*, 60 (1955), 6–14.

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226 Scallop shells were put to many uses and were often a
● [415] substitute for the iron oil-pan of the open-wicked crusie.
[386] Seashells were also burnt to make lime for whitewashing the houses.

[262] In late summer the sprat come ashore in vast numbers on the west and south coasts, so that in Donegal 'they constituted the chief food of the peasantry during three or four months of the year.'[1] They were taken from the water in buckets and sieves, and the mackerel pursuing their prey close against the rocks might be caught almost as easily. In Waterford harbour there were specially erected wickerwork head weirs to take the sprat; and Dr. Went has described a wattled sprat-weir in working order in the estuary of the Blackwater.[2] Fishing from the rocks, too, is most popular in harvest time and though now little more than a pastime it once provided a reserve of food for the winter. About hay-harvest the ballan wrasse is at its best, 'when the flags (wild iris) are in bloom', they say. Known as bavin, byan, morran and by other names, it is now despised nearly everywhere, as is the coalfish which was salted and dried
[192] and which has different names in Gaelic for every stage of its growth to demonstrate its former importance and popularity. 'Glassan' oil was the luminant for the crusie lamps in Rathlin Island. On the north coast you may see anglers 'frassing' for small coalfish, that is attracting them by spitting into the water chewed potatoes or limpets. Formerly ground bait was made
[412] by pounding limpets in rock basins of the type known as 'bullauns' (Fig. 90). Occasionally you may come across a fisherman casting a feather lure for pollack with a line made wholly or in part of horsehair. One method of twisting these lines, with quills, will be described in the following chapter. For short lengths next the hook—the fine foot-lines—white hair is preferred, and I have seen it made in County Down by
[283] twisting the hair between the bare thigh and a hand dusted with wood ash, a method practised by 'primitives' in many parts of the world. Two strands of from fifteen to twenty hairs are twisted on each other. (The anglers in the Seine at Paris are also said to prefer a 'crop' made from a grey mare's tail.) To

[1] 'Kinnfaela', *The Cliff Scenery of South-Western Donegal*, 19.
[2] A. E. J. Went, *Antiquity*, 25 (1951), 32–35.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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and are therefore known as 'harvest herrings'. It is then that the yawls or skiffs which lie half hidden for most of the year have their brief spell of activity, and the farmers who jointly own them find on moonlight nights a cool relief from the hot pressure of harvest. The fish are caught in trammel nets, and they were formerly in great demand not only locally but for many miles inland for salting down as winter 'kitchen'.[1] A more varied diet has lessened the demand, for the great days of the salt herring were the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when a potato diet cried out for a tasty accompaniment. On the north-west coast the herring fishery extends through the winter, with consequent serious risks which the Donegal men have none the less been willing to take. Here, perhaps, is one explanation for the survival of the light rowing curragh down to the coming of powered vessels, for a small sail boat brings many hazards on this stormy Atlantic coast.

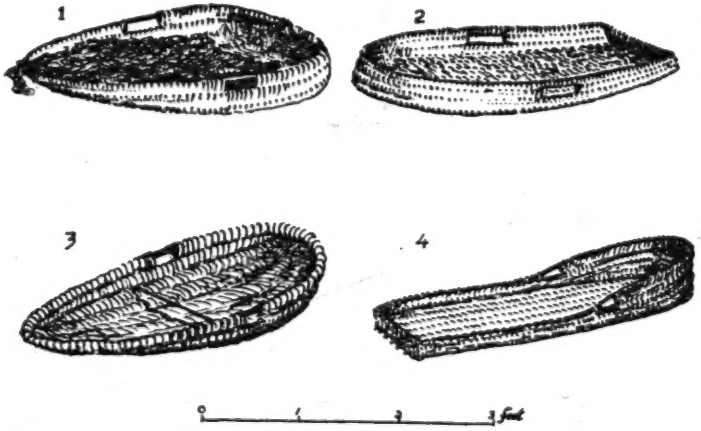

FIG. 82. Long-line baskets. (1) Co. Antrim. (2) Co. Galway. (3) Co. Down. (4) Aran Islands.

Long line fishing for cod, skate, ling and other big fish is almost certainly far older than the herring fishery, and it has preserved down to our own day many ancient practices and

[1] E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, ch. 18.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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them have had to be suppressed: they became occasions of lawlessness and bloodshed. Like the fairs they drew their adherents from several rival neighbourhoods and therefore brought feuding clans together. The following is a typical comment of the early nineteenth century: 'On these patron days, which

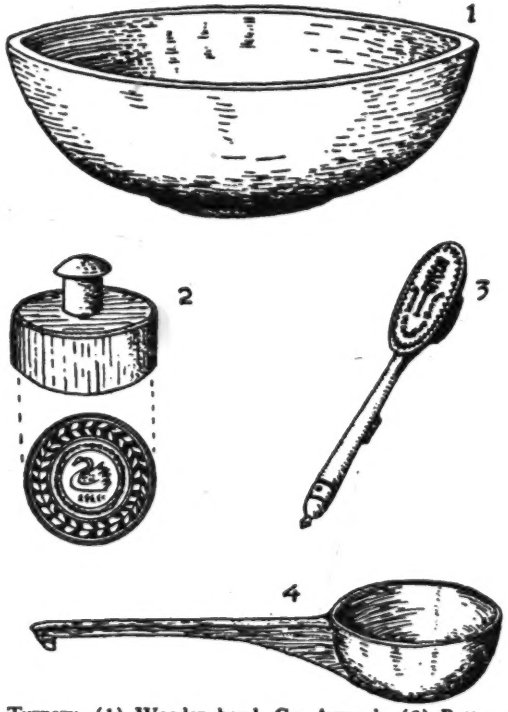

FIG. 83. Turnery. (1) Wooden bowl, Co. Armagh. (2) Butter stamp, Co Fermanagh. (3) Butter stamp, Co. Antrim. (4) Ladle, Co. Antrim.

generally fall out on Sundays, great numbers of young persons of both sexes assemble, tents are erected, music, dancing, drinking and every kind of excess takes place, and the revel not infrequently terminates in battery and bloodshed, from the contention of adverse factions'.[1] Sir William Wilde's description

[1] W. Shaw Mason, *Parochial Survey*, 3, 245 (of Listerling, Co. Kilkenny).

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

with him while fishing or be brought his dinner and afternoon lunch in the field. Infants and young children are fed milk at various times, and the youth often eat biscuits, candy, or bread spread with sugar between the five regular meals.

Most women bake their own bread in "pot ovens" suspended over the open fire, with ingredients purchased in the shops, but some buy bakery bread which is delivered from the mainland once a week. Women with many offspring must bake bread daily, since as many as five loaves will be eaten in a day by a family of eight. Cream is saved from the milk and turned into butter in locally made churns every few days, to provide the pound or more of butter consumed in a week by each member of the family. A few women purchase shop butter and also margarine for cooking, but the latter is not used on the table (despite the fact that it is one-third the price of imported butter), because it is an artificial product and thus thought to lack food value. Both chicken and duck eggs are eaten, and some persons prefer hard to soft boiled eggs. Men insist on drinking their tea from large mugs and prefer their bread sliced thick and spread generously with butter. Telling of a tea that he attended in Dublin, a man complained of teacups the size of egg cups and bread cut so thin that "you could see houses on the mainland through it." Children are more prone than adults to use jam on their bread, and a large jar of imported jam will last but a day in a household containing six children.

Few families can afford to serve meat daily, and sometimes several days will pass before meat appears on the table. Among the meats eaten are lamb, mutton, chicken, and fish procured locally, and rasher and sausage bought in the shops; however, some families have beef and lamb shipped directly to them from mainland shops weekly. Meats usually are boiled, even fish, and soup and gravy are made from the liquids formed. Although lobsters, crabs, snails, and other shelled sea creatures are obtained by the folk, they are exported, used for bait, or cast aside rather than eaten. Two kinds of seaweed are included in the diet and are considered delicacies: *creannach*, which can be consumed raw as it is pulled but more commonly is boiled and dried before being eaten, and *carraigín*, which when cooked with milk makes a tasty blancmange. These seaweeds are believed to promote health and are used as folk medicines by some islanders, who regard them as having a magical potency.

The potatoes grown in Inis Beag are considered outstanding in taste, even when compared with those grown on the mainland. They are boiled in a "cooking pot" over the open hearth; this container is deeper and has a rounder bottom than its pot oven counterpart. At one time, it was customary to drain potatoes and eat them from a round, flat, short-sided basket woven from sally rods, called a *ciseog*. They still are drained with the basket in many households, but I have observed only three families eating communally from a *ciseog* atop the table. This is thought to be a "backward" custom, and a film producer earned the wrath of the folk by portraying this trait in his work; actually, it did not appear in the film, nor did other sequences, such as a women suckling a pig in time of drought, which the islanders claim that the producer included to brand them "savages." Potatoes when eaten are "stabbed" with a fork, peeled with a knife, and eaten with the

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

fork. It is not unusual for a man to eat six or eight large spuds at a sitting, and the pot used to boil potatoes for a large family is piled high indeed. Spuds also are fed to cattle, poultry, and pets. The diet of families which are most prosperous, keep tourists, or whose members are acculturated is more varied than the diet that I have just described, and these families utilize the shops more than is usual.

The excessive intake of carbohydrates, particularly by children, coupled with the almost complete absence of dental hygiene, has resulted in universal tooth decay among the folk. Many people in their twenties and thirties already wear false teeth, and toothache is the most common physical ailment. My wife and I discovered but one adult who cleans her teeth, and she only once a week with a cloth and toothpaste. The islanders eschew use of the toothbrush for several reasons: some believe that bad teeth are inherited or decay is a contagious disease, and nothing can be done to prevent deterioration once it has set in; others equate decay with the common cold, a natural affliction suffered by everyone which must be accepted fatalistically (and masochistically); while still others regard the toothbrush as an English innovation or its use as an upper class affectation—"If I used one they would say I had fancy ideas."—to be shunned on these grounds. A story whose plot was laid in an island in the region of Inis Beag appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and was illustrated with photographs taken in Inis Thiar. The Dublin model who portrayed the heroine in local attire was recognized as an outsider by the folk who viewed the pictures because her teeth were white and even.

Clothing

The term traditional applied to the much publicized Inis Beag garb refers to the homespun vests and trousers and blue woolen shirts of the men, the ankle-length red and blue woolen skirts and a type of shawl of the women, and the cowskin shoes and woven belts worn by many men but only a few women. Some of these articles of wear are shared with peasants of the region, or were in the past and thus are vestigial; others are unique to Inis Beag; and all are in the process of being replaced by mass produced mainland attire. Of 111 adult males in Inis Beag, 11 have given up the local dress, as have 9 of the 85 adult females. Most of these 20 have returned to the island from having spent time on the mainland or abroad, and as a matter of prestige have chosen to retain the foreign costume. Practically all of the young men past school age who have not been away dress traditionally, but none of the women between ages 18 and 29 do; the youngest women who wear the red or blue skirt are of the latter age.

Although most clothing worn by the islanders is tailored locally, everything but the trousers and vests of the men are made from imported materials. Clothing is tailored from cloth woven by the island weaver from Inis Beag wool which is washed, dyed, and spun in the homes but carded on the mainland. The trousers are brown or grey depending on whether a brown or black weft is combined with the white warp on the loom; they are called "britches" when styled differently as to seam and hem. Vests also are brown or grey in front with backs dyed blue, and

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

582 621 593 three sisters, and ten of two—and they tend to visit together often and lend mutual economic and emotional support.

591 428 342 822 776 When a man marries, his parents relinquish the holding, and its direction passes into the hands of the newlyweds. Arensberg and Kimball talk of the "west room" complex, which may exist in many parts of peasant Ireland but does not in Inis Beag. Houses in north and west Co. Clare "with remarkable uniformity" are aligned east and west, and on the son's marriage the old couple moves into the westernmost room "behind the hearth." This room is linked with the Celtic supernatural, for fairy paths are thought to be located along the western side of many houses, and the pagan afterworld—the Isle of the Blest—is a sunken land mass in the nearby western sea (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:134–136). In Inis Beag, on the contrary, over one-third of the domiciles since 1841 have been aligned north and south, fairy trails are found mostly at the back of the island, and a retiring couple may choose any of three rooms (or more in modern homes) to move into. The west room of Co. Clare is called simply "the room" in Inis Beag.

342 [178] [177] [65] Thirty-four of the 71 inhabited buildings in the island have thatched roofs (see Fig. 8), while the others are antiquated houses which lately have been renovated, mainly by replacing thatch with slate, or are newly built. The last of the traditional "cabins" or "cottages" were constructed in the 1930s, and the first of the modern ones during the 1890s—with two stories initially, and styled and subsidized by the Congested Districts Board. Old and renovated houses are rectangular in shape, are constructed of whitewashed stones with concrete floors, and have a large central kitchen with doors or half-doors to the outside both front and back. "The room" is beyond the kitchen at one end of the building, and two bedrooms (one in the most ancient cabins) are at the other. Lofts for sleeping are in the gable of the roof above "the room" and bedrooms, and are entered by ladder [372] or staircase from the kitchen. Fireplaces share a common wall and chimney between the kitchen and "the room," as they also may between the two bedrooms; but the kitchen hearth is the most used, and in some homes is not permitted to die out.

351 [343] [244] The space between the cottage and the low stone wall and outbuildings surrounding it is called the "street." Outbuildings at the back include a toilet and various storage sheds—for spuds and turf sods in particular, although the latter often are stacked instead against a gable of the cabin. In a portion of the street or a small field beyond the wall, a garden for vegetables is maintained for easy access.

342 [262] [264] [415] [178] [352] The kitchen doors of the house sometimes open into small halls in the front or back, or both, and when the weather is not too cold or blustery, the door opening to the street on the windward side is kept closed and its opposite open. In the kitchen, which is the center of family activities, are: the fireplace at which cooking is done with pot and cooking ovens hung from an iron hook; the table around which the family eats their five daily meals; the sideboard, known as a "dresser," filled with "delph"—both everyday and "best" china; the religious shrine with "blessed lamp" surrounded by religious pictures and sacred objects; and, occasionally, a "settlebed" which, when closed, serves as a bench during the daytime.

354 [352] [616] [593] [178] The hearth in the kitchen is indented into the wall to provide two hobs, or seats, and on a chilly or dampish day the folk will nestle inside the fireplace and sit tightly together on a bench drawn up close to the turf fire for warmth. This